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Mr P Binks  
Head of Learning and Development  
Kwik-Fit (GB) Limited  
20 Cramner Road  
Derby  
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Dear Mr Binks

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: good practice in apprenticeship training

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 23 November 2009 to look at good practice in motor vehicle apprenticeship training.

The visit provided valuable information that will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included discussions with key members of staff, learners and key partners.

Features of good practice

■ The strong company commitment to training apprentices.

The Kwik-Fit group has a very strong commitment to training staff and to recruiting and training apprentices to improve and grow the business. About £1.3 million was invested on training last year. Currently, it employs 277 apprentices and Kwik-Fit staff train them at one of three Kwik-Fit owned and operated training centres in the United Kingdom. Initially, the business trained apprentices in the fast-fit and tyre- and exhaust-fitting areas. A business decision was taken to grow the business by providing additional vehicle servicing and repair services to customers. Apprentices have been recruited and trained to complete this work and some have been recruited from the existing workforce. Of the current 277 apprentices, about 60% are on fast-fit apprenticeships and 40% are on servicing and repair apprenticeships. The investment in time, staffing and cost to maintain a well-trained workforce is very high but the business benefits show that this has been a wise investment.

- The good recruitment, induction and initial assessment processes that support learning.

The selection and recruitment processes are organised well and provide employers with good-quality young people suitable for the apprenticeship programmes. Applicants are required to complete an online application form on the Kwik-Fit website and a basic mathematics and English test. There are no pre-entry qualification requirements but completing the test and form takes some time. Completing the process shows they have a genuine interest in the job. A member of the Kwik-Fit recruitment staff makes telephone contact with applicants for areas where vacancies exist. A short telephone interview is completed to establish the applicants' willingness to travel for off-the-job training and their general interests and hobbies. If they are considered suitable, an interview with the employer is arranged. The manager of the Kwik-Fit branch interviews each person and asks about their knowledge of the company and the industry and gives them a simple practical task to complete. Once on the programme, all apprentices attend a three-day induction at a Kwik-Fit training centre and undergo initial assessment testing to identify any learning-support needs. Where necessary, support is arranged on an individual basis. Following the induction, apprentices attend the first off-the-job training block at one of three dedicated training centres. All apprentices are supplied with work boots, work wear and personal protective equipment. A toolkit is also supplied, for which apprentices pay each month. However, as an incentive to complete the apprenticeship framework requirements, this money is refunded when the apprenticeship is achieved. The initial induction and training block are organised well and provide apprentices with the key things they need to know about the initial qualifications and job role before starting work. Good information about equality and diversity is explained and explored, and health, safety and well-being issues are explained and examined well.

- The good training workshops and classroom facilities used to provide well-planned and well-managed training.

Apprentices attend one of three dedicated training centres to complete well-planned and managed block-release training. Good standards of dress code and conduct are required for all apprentices attending the Kwik-Fit training centres. All apprentices are provided with corporate clothing to wear at the training centre. Training centre staff also adhere to a corporate dress code and there is a professional approach to training. Apprentices train on up-to-date vehicles at the centres and use very good training equipment. Apprentices stay in a good quality local hotel while they are away from home. Experienced, well-qualified and knowledgeable tutors provide well-planned and delivered training modules. Learners find the training to be very useful, providing them with the relevant skills and knowledge required to work effectively in the Kwik-Fit centres. The block-release process provides good opportunities to embed theoretical and practical training on technical vehicle systems that learners are likely to have to repair at work. Purpose-made teaching aids and training rigs have been purchased and are used very effectively. All Kwik-Fit apprentices complete additional units to those required for the apprenticeship frameworks. Completion of the additional units has previously delayed completion of the main apprenticeship framework

qualifications. However, the additional units are now started after the main framework requirements have been claimed to prevent this problem.

■ The good use of management information to monitor learners' progress.

A new integrated management information system has been purchased recently to provide business-wide data and to monitor sales and performance overall. The new system provides managers with important information about apprentices' progress against targets while on their programmes. The system is a big investment and is already providing far more useful information than the previous training-specific system. Assessors are given progress targets for the apprentices they are responsible for. The system provides managers with clear reports about targets, progression against milestones, completion to date in each framework and training module, test results and information about learners' progress reviews. As the integrated management information system is available throughout the company, senior managers across the business also have access to the information.

■ The good involvement of employers in the apprenticeship programmes.

Employers at the Kwik-Fit retail centres are provided with a copy of the apprentices block-release off-the-job training modules so that they know exactly what they will be learning and when. Following off-the-job training blocks, employers are emailed a report about their apprentices' progression and what tasks they have been trained to complete. Employers are then required to provide as much work as possible in these areas. This is to ensure the assessor can evaluate the application of their new skills and knowledge in the workplace. Apprentices are assessed for both the National Vocational Qualification and for key skills at work. They complete workplace assignments to assist in the evidence collection process. Employers are very supportive of apprentices, and wherever possible, provide them with good opportunities to learn and gain competence in their identified tasks.

### Areas for development

No key areas for development were identified during this visit.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop apprenticeship training in your organisation.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your Learning and Skills Council and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

John Grimmer  
Her Majesty's Inspector